IN THE CLAIMS

At the time of the Office Action, claims 1-12 were pending. Please withdraw claims 7 and 12 and add claim 13. Please amend claims 1, 4-6 and 8-11. Claims 1-13 remain pending.

1.   (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A method of pre-processing of a machine-readable form image with non-fixed fields layout, ~~comprising~~ the method comprising:

[[-]] acquiring a bit-mapped image of [[the]] the machine-readable form filled in ~~form,~~ with print in one or more non-fixed data input fields;

[[-]] identifying at least one form model ~~of a form,~~ the at least one form model containing spatial and parametric properties of objects thereof[[,]] ;

[[-]] preliminarily assigning at least one object of the form as a reference point for spatial binding of at least one non-fixed data input field thereof; [[, -]] ~~performing at least the following steps:~~

[[•]]   ~~a step of~~ eliminating any skew, distortion and noise ~~of the~~ in the bit-mapped image[,[]];

[[•]]   ~~a step of~~ parsing the bit-mapped image into regions[[,]] ; and

[[•]]   ~~a step of~~ defining a spatial location of at least one non-fixed data input field relative[[ly]] to at least one reference point, ~~said step further comprising:~~ wherein said defining the location of the at least one non-fixed data input field comprises:

[[■]]   selecting a non-fixed data input field to search in ~~the said~~ the at least one form model ~~description,~~ ;

[[■]]   accepting from the at least one form model ~~description~~ at least one reference point ~~properties~~ property for [[the]] a spatial relative reference of the said data input field[[,]] ;

[[■]]   searching and locating said at least one reference point on the form bit-mapped image[[,]] ;

[[■]]   searching and locating the said data input field on the form bit-mapped image relative[[ly]] to at least one reference point taking into account all spatial and parametrical properties[[,]] described in the form model[[,]] ; and

[[■]]   ~~profound identification of the said~~ identifying each data input field position in the case of multiple ~~search result~~ data input fields.

2.   (ORIGINAL) The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the said reference point is represented by a text region.

3.   (ORIGINAL) The method as recited in claim 2, wherein the said text region is additionally subjected to a text recognition.

4.   (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method as recited in claim 1, wherein in the case of multiple ~~search result~~ data input fields the said identification of each data input field is performed via setting up and accepting of hypotheses and compliance estimation ~~with~~ of the form model ~~description~~.

5.   (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method as recited in claim 4, wherein an additional information about [[the]] each of said non-fixed data input field is used.

6.   (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method as recited in claim 1, wherein [[the]] a non-fixed data input field may be used as a reference point.

7.   (WITHDRAWN) The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the said step of data input field identification in a case of multiple identification result is performed partly manually.

8.   (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the spatial location of a reference point ~~spatial location~~ is not fixed from a first scan of the machine-readable form to a second scan of the machine-readable form.

9.   (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method as recited in claim 1, wherein one reference point is used for spatial binding of more [[then]] than one data input field.

10.   (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the spatial binding of one data input field is performed relative to more [[then]] than one reference point.

11.   (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method as recited in claim 1, wherein a reference point comprises more [[then]] than one form object.

12.   (WITHDRAWN) The method as recited in claim 1, wherein a reference point is described in a form of alternative.

13.   (NEW) The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the identifying each data input field position in the case of multiple data input fields is a profound identification.